

# **The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program**

*Formerly known as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program  
(FINI)*

## **2019 Request for Applications (RFA)**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 10, 2019**

**ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA**



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

National Institute  
of Food and  
Agriculture

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Grant Program**

**INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE:** This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.331.

**DATES:** Applications must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on June 10, 2019, 5 p.m. EST. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**STAKEHOLDER INPUT:** We at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seek your comments about this RFA. We will consider your comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit your written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice via email to [Policy@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:Policy@nifa.usda.gov). (This email address is only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Grant Program RFA, formally known as FINI.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** NIFA requests applications for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) formally known as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program, for fiscal year (FY) 2019 to support projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and nutrition assistance by providing incentives at the point of purchase. The anticipated amount available for NIFA to support this program in FY 2019 is approximately \$41 million.

NIFA will host a webinar for potential applicants to review this proposal and match requirements on May 15, 2019 at 2:00pm Eastern Time (see **Table 1**). NIFA will record and post the webinar to the [FINI](#) webpage.

**Table 1:** GUS Schumacher RFA Webinar Information

| Online Access Information  |
|--|
| Access Webinar: <a href="https://nifa-connect.nifa.usda.gov/finip/">https://nifa-connect.nifa.usda.gov/finip/</a><br>Zoom Meeting: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/497848236">https://zoom.us/j/497848236</a> |
| Dial-in Information  |
| One tap mobile<br>+16465588656,,497848236# US (New York)<br>+16699006833,,497848236# US (San Jose)   |
| Dial by your location<br>+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)<br>+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)  |
| Find your local number: <a href="#">Local Numbers</a><br>Meeting ID: 497 848 236   |

This notice identifies the objectives for **GusNIP** projects, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a **GusNIP** grant. FINI is now GusNIP throughout the 2019 RFA, only the program codes remain the same. For example, GusNIP pilot program is still FPP for a pilot program.

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## **PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority and Background**

Section 4205 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 amended section 4405 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (“FCEA”) (7 U.S.C. 7517). The authority to administer this program was delegated to the Director of NIFA through the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE) (see [79 FR 44101 \(July 30, 2014\)](#)). In FY 2019, it is anticipated that approximately **\$41 million** will be available for grants under this program.

### **B. Purpose and Priorities**

Strategic Goal 7 of the [USDA Strategic Plan](#): Provide all Americans access to a safe, nutritious and secure food supply. The primary goal of the GusNIP grant program is to fund and evaluate projects intended to “increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers participating in SNAP by providing incentives at the point of purchase” (FCEA, § 4405(b)(2)(A)(ii)(II)). For GusNIP grant, NIFA defines “fruits and vegetables” as “any variety of fresh, canned, dried, or frozen whole or cut fruits and vegetables without added sugars, fats, or oils, and salt (i.e. sodium).” The program will test strategies that could contribute to our understanding of how best to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants to inform future efforts.

The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 requires the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretary) to conduct an independent evaluation of funded projects, to measure the impact of projects on: “improving the nutrition and health status of participating households receiving incentives” and “increasing fruit and vegetable purchases in participating households.”

Incentivizing purchases of fruits and vegetables increases their affordability and consumption. For example, The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently completed an evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP), which investigated the impact of making fruits and vegetables more affordable to SNAP participants. Under HIP, SNAP households received 30 cents on every SNAP dollar they spent on targeted fruits and vegetables at participating SNAP-authorized firms including large supermarkets, grocery stores and farmers markets. This pilot operated in Hampden County, MA between November 2011 and December 2012. A rigorous evaluation showed that HIP significantly increased the consumption of targeted fruits and vegetables and this increased consumption was on the order of about one quarter of a cup per day. The final evaluation report is available online at [Healthy Incentives Pilot Final Evaluation Report](#). Grantees that receive both GusNIP and SNAP-Ed funds must keep in mind the following SNAP-Ed guidelines:

[SNAP-Ed](#) is an evidence-based program that helps people lead healthier lives. SNAP-Ed teaches people using or eligible for SNAP about good nutrition and how to make their food dollars stretch further. SNAP-Ed participants also learn to be physically active.

- While SNAP-Ed providers are encouraged to form partnerships and collaborations in order to leverage resources, SNAP-Ed funds may not be used to provide actual cash or other financial incentives.
- SNAP-Ed funds can be used for policy, systems and environmental change interventions, such as working with firms on fruit and vegetable product placement, and social marketing in addition to educational efforts at venues such as Farmers Markets, Senior Centers, Child Care locations, etc.

All GusNIP projects must do the following: (1) aim to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers participating in SNAP by providing incentives at the point of purchase; (2) operate through authorized and reported SNAP firms per Part I Section D of this RFA titled “Program Policy”, and in compliance with all relevant SNAP regulations and operating requirements; (3) agree to participate in the GusNIP comprehensive program evaluation and facilitate participation through data collection, and the use of Data Use Agreements and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as outlined in Part IV § B and Part I § D of this RFA (Content and Form of Application Submission and Program Policy, respectively); and (4) ensure that the same terms and conditions apply to purchases made by individuals with SNAP benefits and with incentives provided under the GusNIP grant program as apply to purchases made by individuals who are not members of households receiving benefits as provided in 7 C.F.R. 278.2(b).

Applicants proposing projects that require interaction with or modification of EBT systems must submit a letter of support from applicable SNAP State Agencies as part of their grant application. All other applicants are encouraged, but are not required, to submit letters of support from applicable SNAP State Agencies as part of their grant application.

In reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA, and depending on the type of GusNIP project (as described in further detail in Part I, C.1, C.2, and C.3), NIFA will give priority to projects that:

- Maximize the share of funds used for direct incentives to participants;
- Use direct-to-consumer sales marketing;
- Demonstrate a track record of designing and implementing successful nutrition incentive programs that connect low-income consumers and agricultural producers;
- Provide locally or regionally produced fruits and vegetables;
- Include a project design (1) that provides incentives when fruits or vegetables are purchased using supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits; and (2) in which the incentives earned may be used only to purchase fruits or vegetables;
- Have demonstrated the ability to provide services to underserved communities;
- Include coordination with multiple stakeholders, such as farm organizations, nutrition education programs, cooperative extension services, public health departments, private and public health insurance agencies, cooperative grocers, grocery associations, and community-based and non-governmental organizations;
- Offer supplemental services in high-need communities, including online ordering, transportation between home and store, and delivery services;
- Include food retailers (firms) that are open (1) for extended hours and (2) most or all days of the year; or address other criteria as established by the Secretary.

GusNIP projects present the opportunity to bring together stakeholders from distinct parts of the food system and to foster understanding of how they might improve the nutrition and health status of participating households receiving incentives through the purchase of fruits and vegetables.

### **C. Program Area Description**

NIFA is soliciting applications for five types of grants:

1. GusNIP Pilot Projects (FPP);
2. GusNIP Projects (FIP);

3. GusNIP Large Scale Projects (FLSP);
4. Produce Prescription (PPR); and
5. Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers (NTAE)

### **1. GusNIP Pilot Projects (FPP)**

**Funding Level:** Awards not to exceed \$100,000.

**Period of Performance:** Project period is up to one year.

**Program Code:** FPP

GusNIP Pilot Projects (FPP) support the development of projects with an infusion of federal dollars to pilot innovative strategies to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables (as defined in Subpart VIII (E) of this document) by low-income consumers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase. FPPs must operate through authorized SNAP firms, and comply with all relevant SNAP regulations and operating requirements. FPPs are aimed at new entrants seeking funding for a project in the early stages of incentive program development. The project should be designed to create community-based food incentive projects with objectives, activities, and outcomes that are in alignment with the GusNIP grant program's primary goals. Preference will be given to pilot projects that do one or more of the following:

- a) Maximize the share of funds used for direct incentives to participants;
- b) Use direct-to-consumer sales marketing;
- c) Demonstrate a track record of designing and implementing successful nutrition incentive programs that connect low-income consumers and agricultural producers;
- d) Provide locally or regionally produced fruits and vegetables;
- e) Include a project design (1) that provides incentives when fruits or vegetables are purchased using supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits; and (2) in which the incentives earned may be used only to purchase fruits or vegetables;
- f) Have demonstrated the ability to provide services to underserved communities;
- g) Include coordination with multiple stakeholders, such as farm organizations, nutrition education programs, cooperative extension services, public health departments, private and public health insurance agencies, cooperative grocers, grocery associations, and community-based and non-governmental organizations;
- h) Offer supplemental services in high-need communities, including online ordering, transportation between home and store, and delivery services; and
- i) Include food retailers (firms) that are open (1) for extended hours and (2) most or all days of the year; or address other criteria as established by the Secretary.

Examples of FPPs include, but are not limited to, innovative strategies working at point of purchase with SNAP authorized firms, including food stores, market stands, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture programs (CSAs), marketing and consumer cooperatives, and other SNAP authorized firms.

*Project Self-Evaluation.* All projects must involve SNAP participants. All FPPs must submit a project proposal that includes a method of evaluating the success of the program in developing a viable project. Because GusNIP Pilot Projects are in the earliest stages of development and would not offer a fair test of effectiveness, they will only be required to submit limited information and data for the comprehensive program evaluation that will inform the Department of potential new

strategies and promising new programs to consider in future funding cycles. FPP grantees will be required to provide their self-assessment data to the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers. Project assessments must follow USDA guidelines to ensure an appropriate level of comparability of methods, outcomes, and measures.

## **2. GusNIP Projects**

**Funding Level:** Awards not to exceed \$500,000.

**Period of Performance:** Project period is not to exceed four (4) years

**Program Code:** FIP

GusNIP Projects (FIP) support the development and evaluation of projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables (as defined in Part VIII D. of this RFA) by low-income consumers participating in SNAP by providing incentives at the point of purchase. The projects will test strategies that could increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants to inform future efforts, and develop effective and efficient benefit redemption technologies.

FIPs should be designed to create or support local community-based food projects with objectives, activities, and outcomes that are in alignment with the GusNIP grant program's primary goals. FIP(s) are aimed at mid-sized groups developing incentive programs at the local or state level; organizations in this category are typically not new to implementing such programs, although projects are required to expand the breadth, scope or reach of these programs, rather than supplant current program resources. FIPs are not in the pilot stages of development and should have established relationships with necessary partners and collaborators. FIPs must operate through authorized SNAP firms, and comply with all relevant SNAP regulations and operating requirements. Preference will be given to projects that do one or more of the following:

- a) Maximize the share of funds used for direct incentives to participants;
- b) Use direct-to-consumer sales marketing;
- c) Demonstrate a track record of designing and implementing successful nutrition incentive programs that connect low-income consumers and agricultural producers;
- d) Provide locally or regionally produced fruits and vegetables;
- e) Include a project design (1) that provides incentives when fruits or vegetables are purchased using supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits; and (2) in which the incentives earned may be used only to purchase fruits or vegetables;
- f) Have demonstrated the ability to provide services to underserved communities;
- g) Include coordination with multiple stakeholders, such as farm organizations, nutrition education programs, cooperative extension services, public health departments, private and public health insurance agencies, cooperative grocers, grocery associations, and community-based and non-governmental organizations;
- h) Offer supplemental services in high-need communities, including online ordering, transportation between home and store, and delivery services; and
- i) Include food retailers (firms) that are open (1) for extended hours and (2) most or all days of the year; or address other criteria as established by the Secretary.

Examples of FIPs include, but are not limited to, innovative strategies working at point of purchase with SNAP authorized firms, including food stores, market stands, farmers' markets, CSAs, marketing and consumer cooperatives, and other SNAP authorized firms.

*Project Self-Evaluation.* All FIPs must involve SNAP participants and include an evaluation of whether the project met its goals and objectives. Project evaluations must follow USDA guidelines to ensure an appropriate level of comparability of methods, outcomes, and measures. All FIPs grantees will be required to cooperate with and contribute to the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers.

### **3. GusNIP Large Scale Projects**

**Funding Level:** Awards of \$500,000 or greater

**Period of Performance:** Project period is not to exceed four (4) years

**Program Code:** FLSP

The primary purpose of the GusNIP Large Scale Projects (FLSP) is to develop and evaluate projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables (as defined in Part VIII D of this RFA) by low-income consumers participating in SNAP by providing incentives at the point of purchase, using effective and efficient benefit redemption technologies. The projects will test strategies that could contribute to our understanding of how best to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants to inform future efforts.

FLSP are designed to create or support multi-county, State-wide and regional incentive programs. FLSP should be coordinated food projects with objectives, activities, and outcomes that align with the GusNIP grant program's primary goals. Projects must operate through authorized SNAP firms, and comply with all relevant SNAP regulations and operating requirements. Projects are required to expand the breadth, scope or reach of these programs, rather than supplant current program resources. Preference will be given to projects that do one or more of the following:

- a) Maximize the share of funds used for direct incentives to participants;
- b) Use direct-to-consumer sales marketing;
- c) Demonstrate a track record of designing and implementing successful nutrition incentive programs that connect low-income consumers and agricultural producers;
- d) Provide locally or regionally produced fruits and vegetables;
- e) Include a project design (1) that provides incentives when fruits or vegetables are purchased using supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits; and (2) in which the incentives earned may be used only to purchase fruits or vegetables;
- f) Have demonstrated the ability to provide services to underserved communities;
- g) Include coordination with multiple stakeholders, such as farm organizations, nutrition education programs, cooperative extension services, public health departments, private and public health insurance agencies, cooperative grocers, grocery associations, and community-based and non-governmental organizations;
- h) Offer supplemental services in high-need communities, including online ordering, transportation between home and store, and delivery services; and
- i) Include food retailers (firms) that are open (1) for extended hours and (2) most or all days of the year; or address other criteria as established by the Secretary.

GusNIP Large Scale Projects include, but are not limited to, innovative strategies working at point of purchase with SNAP authorized firms, including food stores, market stands, farmers' markets, CSAs, marketing and consumer cooperatives, and other SNAP authorized firms.

*Project Self-Evaluation.* All projects must involve SNAP participants and include an evaluation of whether the project met its goals and objectives. Project evaluations must follow USDA guidelines

to ensure an appropriate level of comparability of methods, outcomes, and measures. A higher level of rigor will be expected for the FLSP evaluations. All FLSPs will also be required to cooperate with and contribute to the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers.

#### **4. Produce Prescription**

**Funding Level:** Awards of \$500,000 or less; total available is \$4.5 million – **No Match Required**

**Period of Performance:** Project period is not to exceed three (3) years

**Program Code:** PPR

PPR are aimed at groups developing county, multi-county, and state-wide programs, partnering with one or more healthcare entities. The primary purpose of the PPR is to conduct projects that demonstrate and evaluate the impact of the projects on (1) the improvement of dietary health through increased consumption of fruits and vegetables; (2) the reduction of individual and household food insecurity; and (3) the reduction in healthcare use and associated costs.

In carrying out a project using a PPR grant an eligible entity shall partner with 1 or more healthcare partners.

To be eligible to receive a PPR grant an eligible entity must prescribe fresh fruits and vegetables to members; submit to the Secretary an application containing such information as the Secretary may require, including the information described below; and either provide financial or non-financial incentives for members to purchase or procure fresh fruits and vegetables; provide educational resources on nutrition to members; or establish additional accessible locations for members to procure fresh fruits and vegetables. One is eligible to participate in the PPR program if they are eligible for the following: (1) benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.); or (2) medical assistance under a State plan or a waiver of such a plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) and enrolled under such plan or waiver; and (3) a member of a low-income household that suffers from, or is at risk of developing, a diet-related health condition.

*Application.* An application must identify the one or more healthcare partners with which the eligible entity is partnering with and include a description of the methods by which an eligible entity must:

- Screen and verify eligibility for members for participation in a produce prescription project. This may be a one or two part verification process.
- Implement an effective produce prescription project, including the role of each healthcare partner in implementing the produce prescription project;
- Evaluate members participating in a produce prescription project with respect to the matters described in the eligibility section.
- Provide educational opportunities relating to nutrition to members participating in a produce prescription project; and
- Inform members of the availability of produce prescription project, including locations at which produce prescriptions may be redeemed.

Additional Application Requirements:

- include a description of any additional non-profit or emergency feeding organizations that shall be involved in the project and the role of each additional non-profit or emergency

- feeding organization in implementing and evaluating an effective PPR;
- include documentation of a partnership agreement with a relevant State Medicaid agency or other appropriate entity as determined by the Secretary, to evaluate the effectiveness of the produce prescription project in reducing healthcare use and associate costs;
- provide adequate plans to collect data for reporting and agreement to provide the information for the evaluation report;
- include an agreement stating your organization intends to share information and core data with the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers.

*Applicability.* The following applies under the PPR program:

- a) In general, the value of any benefit provided to a participant in any activity funded under the PPR will be treated as supplemental nutrition benefits under section 8(b) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2017 (b)).
- b) Prohibition on Collection of Sales Taxes. Each State must ensure that no State or local tax is collected on a purchase of food with assistance provided under GusNIP or under the PPR.
- c) No limitation of benefits. Grants made available under GusNIP or under the PPR cannot be used to carry out any project that limits the use of benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) or any other Federal nutrition law.
- d) Household Allotment. Assistance provided under GusNIP or under the PPR to households receiving benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program must not:
  - be considered part of the supplemental nutrition benefits of the household; or
  - be used in the collection or disposition of claims under section 13 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2022).

Applicants should request a budget and project period commensurate with the proposed project. Ten percent of the total funding is allocated towards the PPR projects; for 2019 the total is \$4.5 million for PPR grants.

*Project Self-Evaluation.* All projects must involve eligible participants under PPR and include an evaluation of whether the project met its goals and objectives. Project evaluations must follow USDA guidelines to ensure an appropriate level of comparability of methods, outcomes, and measures. As discussed below, a higher level of rigor will be expected for the PPR evaluations. All PPRs will also be required to cooperate with and contribute core data to the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers.

## **5. Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers Funding**

**Funding Level:** Cooperative Agreement Awards of \$8.5 Million for FY 2019 (There will be \$8.5 million for FY 2020) (**No Match Required**)

**Period of Performance:** Project period is not to exceed four (4) years

**Program Code:** NTAE

The Centers must be capable of providing services related to grants for GusNIP and for the Produce Prescription Program, including:

- a. Offering incentive program training and technical assistance to applicants and grantees to the extent practicable, and also promoting program growth in states with low participation including:
  - (i) collecting and providing information on best practices that may include communications, signage, record keeping, incentive instruments development and integration of point of sale systems, and reporting;
  - (ii) disseminating information and assisting with collaboration among grantee projects, applicable State agencies, and nutrition education programs;
  - (iii) facilitating communication between grantees, evaluators/researchers, and the Department of Agriculture and applicable State agencies;
  - (iv) providing support for the development of best practices for produce prescription projects and the sharing of information among eligible entities and healthcare providers that participate in a produce prescription project; and
  - (v) other services identified by the Secretary.
- b. Creating a system to collect and compile core data sets from eligible entities that:
  - (i) uses standard metrics with consideration of outcome measures for existing projects;
  - (ii) includes to the extent practicable grocers, farmers, health professionals, researchers, incentive program managers, and employees of the Department of Agriculture with direct experience with implementation of existing incentive programs in the design of the instrument(s) through which data will be collected and the mechanism for reporting;
  - (iii) compiles project data from FPP, FIP, FSLP, and PPR grantees, and beginning in fiscal year 2020 generates an annual report to Congress on grant outcomes including-
  - (iv) the results of the project; and
  - (v) the amount of the grant funds used for the project; and
  - (vi) creates and maintains a publicly accessible online site that makes annual reports and incentive program information available in an anonymized format that protects confidential, personal, or other sensitive data.

Under the 2018 Farm Bill, the Centers will be competitively awarded as cooperative agreements, not grants. Cooperative agreements will be with one or more organizations with expertise in developing outcome-based reporting, at least one of which has expertise in the food insecurity nutrition incentive program and at least one of which as expertise in produce prescription projects. Organizations may include:

- (i) nongovernmental organizations;
- (ii) state cooperative extension services;
- (iii) regional food systems centers;
- (iv) Federal, State, or Tribal agencies;
- (v) Institutions of higher education (as defined in section 101 (a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001 (a))); or
- (vi) Other appropriate entities as determined by the Secretary.

#### **D. Program Policy**

This section deals with certain aspects of GusNIP and SNAP policies as they pertain to the GusNIP grant program. This section also deals with policies regarding the participation of firms (e.g., convenience stores, grocery stores, farmers markets, direct-marketing farmers) participating in GusNIP grant projects. “Firm” is defined at 7 CFR 271.2. Questions regarding the policies discussed below may be directed to [FINI@fns.usda.gov](mailto:FINI@fns.usda.gov). General questions about SNAP and EBT should be directed to USDA FNS’s Ask the Expert system at: [Ask the Expert](#)

(→ “Nutrition” → “Supplemental Nutrition Asst. Prgm.”). This system can provide prompt answers for general SNAP inquiries.

## 1. Definition of Incentive

The term “incentive” means any financial inducements that would increase the purchase and consumption of **GusNIP qualifying fruits and vegetables** by SNAP clients.

- a) Examples of allowable financial incentives include coupons or gift cards redeemable for GusNIP qualifying fruits and vegetables.
- b) Examples of unallowable incentives include, but are not limited to, giveaways of alcohol, tobacco, firearms, and lottery tickets.

The cost of incentives must be allowable under the applicable cost principles in 2 CFR part 200, Subpart E. Unallowable incentives may not be paid for with either Federal or matching funds.

## 2. Firm Requirements

*Firm Sourcing.* Brick and mortar firms (e.g., supermarkets and convenience stores) participating in a FIP or FLSP GusNIP grant project must offer GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables for sale that are grown within 100 miles of the firm and/or within the firm’s State – such fruits or vegetables must constitute at least 10% of the firm’s produce supply purchases and/or at least 10% of the firm’s produce sales. FIP or FLSP GusNIP grantees must verify that every brick and mortar firm participating in their grant project meets this requirement. This requirement is waived if the GusNIP FIP or FLSP grant project only incentivizes produce grown within 100 miles of the firm and/or within the firm’s State or if the State growing season is less than 180 days a year. This requirement is not applicable to FPP grant projects.

*Firms with Extended Hours and Days of Operation.* At least 25% of a FLSP GusNIP grantee’s participating firms or at least one firm (whichever is greater) must have extended hours and days of operation. At least 10% a FIP GusNIP grantee’s participating firms or at least one firm (whichever is greater) must have extended hours and days of operation. “Extended hours and days of operation” means a firm that is open more than 40 hours a week and more than 260 days a year.

*GusNIP Qualifying Fruits and Vegetables.* A GusNIP grant project must incentivize the purchase of GusNIP qualifying fruits and vegetables. Such GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables would be considered SNAP staple foods in the fruit or vegetable staple food category.

GusNIP grantees may choose to only incentivize a narrower subset of the GusNIP qualifying fruit or vegetable category (e.g., incentivize only fresh, local fruit). For example, some grantees have chosen to incentivize the fruits and vegetables that appear on their States’ Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Approved Products List (APL). This is an acceptable subset of fruits and vegetables to incentivize under GusNIP. It should be noted, however, that some States’ WIC APLs may exclude products that would otherwise be considered GusNIP qualifying fruits and vegetables (e.g., white potatoes). Some GusNIP grantees have, nevertheless, opted to incentivize only fruits and vegetables that appear on their States’ WIC APLs as this simplifies implementation with their participating firms.

GusNIP grantees that seek to incentivize only a narrower subset of the GusNIP qualifying fruit or vegetable category must justify this in their proposal.

GusNIP grantees may not incentivize only specific brand names or product lines of qualifying fruits or vegetables, nor may GusNIP grantees incentivize only a specific subset of GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables that are not considered by FNS and NIFA to advance the spirit or purpose of the GusNIP.

The definition of GusNIP qualifying fruits and vegetables includes any variety of fresh, canned, dried, or frozen whole or cut fruits and vegetables without added sugars, fats, or oils, and salt (i.e. sodium). Examples of GusNIP qualifying fruits and vegetables include, but are not limited to, the following: frozen spinach, fresh apples, sundried tomatoes, 100% orange juice, and canned artichoke hearts (so long as these products contain no added sugars, fats, oils, or salts). SNAP eligible seeds and plants intended for cultivation and consumption (e.g., tomato seeds or tomato plants) and fresh herbs (e.g., fresh basil, thyme, or mint) are also considered GusNIP qualifying fruits and vegetables.

Examples of fruit-based and vegetable-based products that do not qualify for the purposes of GusNIP include accessory food items such as powdered, dried, or extracted herbs and spices, fruit punch (less than 100% fruit juice), honey, ketchup and other condiments, as well as multiple ingredient food items that are not primarily composed of qualifying fruits and vegetables (such as pastries containing fruit, frozen pizza pies, or burritos). If you are uncertain as to whether or not a fruit or vegetable product qualifies for the purposes of GusNIP, please check the ingredients panel for the presence of the four aforementioned additives. If sugars, fats, oils, or salts are present as a listed ingredient on the product's nutrition label, then that product is generally not considered a GusNIP qualifying fruit or vegetable.

Incentives may only be earned when a SNAP recipient purchases GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables using only SNAP EBT benefits. Incentives may only be redeemed by SNAP recipients for GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables.

In previous years, incentives could be earned by purchasing or redeemed to purchase any SNAP eligible food. Additionally, in previous years, incentives could be earned through a "no purchase required" mechanism. This is no longer allowable under GusNIP. However, the "no purchase required" is acceptable for the Produce Prescription program (PPR). Non-financial incentives are no longer allowable under GusNIP.

*Sales Tax.* Per Section 4405(a)(3) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill), as amended by Section 4208 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill), no State or local sales tax shall be collected on any purchase of food made using GusNIP grant project incentives.

*Equal Treatment.* Because the statutory language of the 2018 Farm Bill requires GusNIP grantees to provide incentives specifically to SNAP clients, the equal treatment provision of 7 CFR §278.2(b) and 7 CFR §274.7(f) does not apply to GusNIP grantees for the purpose of providing incentives under the GusNIP grant.

*Refunds.* FMs with one central EBT point-of-sale (POS) terminal often utilize scrip or tokens for the redemption of SNAP benefits. Under such a system, SNAP households swipe their EBT cards at the FM's central EBT POS terminal for a declared amount and receive specially marked tokens which can only be spent on eligible food at the FM's stalls and booths. If, after shopping, SNAP households still possess an excess of these tokens they may return to the FM's central EBT POS terminal for a refund on such tokens.

Refunds, both for such tokens and for any product purchased with SNAP benefits, can never be made in cash. Providing cash refunds for SNAP scrip or items purchased with SNAP benefits is considered trafficking SNAP benefits. This is a serious violation of SNAP rules and can have lasting legal ramifications for any firm engaging in such practices. Refunds of SNAP scrip and purchases made with SNAP benefits must be returned to the SNAP household's EBT card through a refund transaction on an EBT POS device.

Incentives received through a GusNIP grant project are intended to increase the consumption of qualifying fruits and vegetables and must be spent accordingly. The returning or refunding of GusNIP benefits is not consistent with the intention of the GusNIP grant program. While spoiled or undesired food products purchased with GusNIP benefits may be exchanged for equivalent food products at the firm's discretion, GusNIP benefits may neither be refunded with cash, nor refunded onto a SNAP household's EBT card through a refund transaction on an EBT POS device. Therefore, if an FM using a scrip system utilizes a distinct GusNIP benefit token (i.e., valid only for GusNIP qualifying fruits and vegetables), such tokens may only be redeemed as intended at the FM; they may not be refunded or exchanged.

*SNAP Firm Data Confidentiality.* Under 7 CFR §278.1(q), certain forms of SNAP firm information are prohibited from disclosure. Local and State SNAP Agencies may not disclose such firm data to GusNIP grantees. The names and addresses of SNAP authorized firm are available to the public and can be obtained via the SNAP [Retailer Locator](#).

However, the FNS number for individual firms is not public information and is subject to restrictions in SNAP regulations at 7 CFR §278.1(q); therefore, it must be obtained directly from the firm. Likewise, SNAP redemption or transaction data at the individual firm level is considered protected data and must be obtained directly from the firm. GusNIP grantees should work in close concert with their participating firm in order to obtain any such required information. Both the FNS number and individual firm transaction/redemption data, while necessary for data collection and evaluation purposes, are protected and shall not be published in a public report. SNAP firm transactions/redemptions should only be reported in aggregate. Whenever transmitting any confidential SNAP firm data to FNS or NIFA, this data must be password protected.

*Changes in GusNIP Grantee Primary Point of Contact.* As described in Part VIII § A(2) of this RFA, GusNIP grantees are required to inform the USDA regarding any changes in their GusNIP grant project's primary point(s) of contact. At the very least this means that GusNIP grantees must inform FNS and NIFA points of contact of any change to their Project Directors (PDs) no more than 10 calendar days after the change occurs. GusNIP grantees are also strongly encouraged to inform NIFA and FNS points of contact of changes to other primary grantee points of contact in a timely fashion. The NIFA and FNS points of contact are: [Daniel Cline](#), [Jane Clary](#), and [FINI-FNS](#). As necessary, NIFA will provide updates to USDA points of contacts to all grantees.

*Allowable Participation of Firms in your GusNIP Grant Project.* It is necessary to partner with firms to conduct a GusNIP grant project. Before a firm can participate in a FINI grant, the following steps must occur in this order:

1. If the firm is not already SNAP authorized, the firm applies for and obtains [SNAP Authorization](#);
2. The grantee and firm sign a MOU (for more regarding this MOU, see below);
3. The firm submits the signed MOU to the [SNAP Retailer Service Center](#);
4. The grantee submits to [FNS](#) the firm's information (i.e., FNS number, firm name, firm address); and,
5. FNS responds within 30 calendar days to approve or deny the participation of the firm.

This application process may take up to 60 calendar days, so it is important that GusNIP grantees work closely with their firms to ensure that this firm approval process is not delayed. More information is available regarding this process online at: [FINI Grant Program](#).

*Memorandum of Understanding between Grantee and Firm(s).* FINI grantees must work with their prospective firm(s) to obtain a MOU before that firm can participate in the GusNIP grant project. The MOU must be signed and dated by the grantee project director(s) and all of the firm's owners. If the grantee is working with a chain of centrally owned and operated firms, then one MOU that includes all relevant information on every participating firm location will be sufficient. The MOU must be accompanied by a coversheet bearing the GusNIP grantee name, the GusNIP grant award number, the firm's name(s), the firm's FNS number(s), and the phrase "GusNIP Grantee-Firm MOU Attached".

The MOU must be submitted by the firm to the [SNAP Retailer Service Center](#) before USDA can approve the firm to participate in a GusNIP grant project and must include the following information:

- The name of the firm (including any other names the firm does business as or under);
- The street address of the firm;
- The mailing address of the firm (if different than the street address of the firm);
- The firm's FNS number;
- The firm's hours and days of operation;
- The proposed start date of the firm's participation in the grantee's GusNIP grant project;
- The expected end date of the firm's participation in the grantee's GusNIP grant project;
- A general description of the incentives being offered at the firm as part of the project;
- A general description of any other waivers expected, requested, received, or applicable to the firm's involvement in the project;
- An acknowledgement that the firm will provide the grantee with all incentive transaction-related data necessary for a robust evaluation of the GusNIP grant project and that this data will be furnished to NIFA and FNS;
- An acknowledgement that the firm will follow all relevant GusNIP and SNAP rules including, but not limited to, the following:
  - The firm will only accept incentives for GusNIP qualifying fruits or vegetables;
  - The firm will never accept incentives for ineligible products (i.e., non-food, alcohol, tobacco, or hot food products);
  - The firm will never exchange incentives for cash (i.e., trafficking);
  - The firm will never provide cash or SNAP EBT change for incentives;

- The firm will never provide cash or SNAP EBT refunds for incentives;
- The firm will never accept incentives from individuals known not to be legally entitled to possess incentives;
- The firm will never accept incentives to pay credit accounts; and,
- The firm will never knowingly provide false information of a substantive nature regarding their participation in the grant project.
- An acknowledgement that any firm's failure to abide by GusNIP and SNAP rules may result in SNAP disqualification, civil money penalties, and/or criminal penalties.
- An acknowledgement that any grantee's failure to abide by GusNIP grant program rules may result in rescission, in whole or in part, of grant funds.
- An acknowledgement that grantees are responsible for overseeing firms participating in their grant project to ensure that SNAP and GusNIP rules are followed. Grantees will be held responsible for instances of noncompliance that occur at any of their participating firms.

*Misuse of Grant Funds.* In cases in which GusNIP grant funds have been spent on unallowable expenses or otherwise misallocated, the USDA will require that the grantee repay the full amount of grant funds that have been misallocated.

*Grantee Noncompliance with Program Policy.* Grantees and their participating firms are expected to comply with all of the policies and requirements laid out in this RFA document as well as any GusNIP or SNAP policies or requirements further clarified in Q&As, memoranda, or other relevant USDA documents (including all applicable provisions of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and SNAP regulations at 7 CFR 278). Grantees will be notified in writing of instances of noncompliance and will face serious repercussions for repeated instances of noncompliance. Examples of such noncompliance include, but are not limited to, failure to timely report a change of Project Director (PD), allowing unapproved firms to participate in a project, and/or incentivizing ineligible products.

*First Instance of Noncompliance.* If the grantee or the grantee's firms fail to comply with GusNIP or SNAP rules and this is the first instance of noncompliance associated with that grantee, then the USDA will notify the grantee of the issue in writing and establish a timeline for corrective action. The general timeline for such corrective action is 30 calendar days, although the timeline may be extended or shortened depending on the nature and extent of the issue at hand at the discretion of the USDA.

If the grantee fails to take required corrective action within the established timeline, then the USDA will immediately suspend that grantee's access to grant funds. Access to grant funds will be restored when corrective action has been taken.

*Second Instance of Noncompliance.* If the grantee or the grantee's firms fail to comply with GusNIP or SNAP rules and this is the second instance of noncompliance associated with that grantee, then the USDA will immediately suspend that grantee's access to grant funds, notify the grantee of the issue in writing and establish a timeline for corrective action. The general timeline for such corrective action is 30 calendar days, although the timeline may be extended or shortened depending on the nature and extent of the issue at hand at the discretion of the USDA. Access to grant funds will be restored when corrective action has been taken.

*Third Instance of Noncompliance.* If the grantee or the grantee's firms fail to comply with GusNIP or SNAP rules and this is the third instance of noncompliance associated with that grantee, then the USDA will immediately suspend that grantee's access to grant funds, notify the grantee of the issue in writing and establish a timeline for corrective action. In addition, the USDA will rescind 10% of the total Federal grant funding. The general timeline for such corrective action is 30 calendar days, although the timeline may be extended or shortened depending on the nature and extent of the issue at hand at the discretion of the USDA. Access to the remaining grant funds will be restored when corrective action has been taken.

*Further Instances of Noncompliance.* If the grantee or the grantee's firms fail to comply with GusNIP or SNAP rules and more than three such instances of noncompliance have already been documented, then the USDA will rescind the remaining Federal GusNIP grant funds in their entirety.

*Considering a History of Noncompliance during Application Evaluation.* A history of noncompliance with GusNIP or any other USDA grant policies and requirements will be considered during the grant application evaluation process as detailed in Section B. Evaluation.

*Required Cashier Training and Advertising Plan.* GusNIP grant projects succeed best when cashiers and on-site staff are well-trained and involved as stakeholders in the project. Additionally, no GusNIP project can succeed in reaching SNAP recipients without some form of project promotion, outreach, or advertising. Therefore, FLSP and FIP grantees must include a detailed plan for cashier/staff training and advertising of their grant project in their grant application. If the grantee wishes to significantly change this plan after the grantee is awarded, then the grantee must notify NIFA and FNS in writing and receive approval for the proposed change.

*Required Self-Evaluation Plan and Evaluation Reporting.* As noted in Part I. C, FIP, FLSP, and PPR grantees must involve SNAP participants and include an evaluation of whether the project met its goals and objectives. Project self-evaluations must follow USDA guidelines to ensure an appropriate level of comparability of methods, outcomes, and measures. To ensure that project self-evaluations follow USDA guidelines, NIFA and FNS will rigorously review the project self-evaluation plan submitted as a part of the GusNIP grant application. FIP, FLSP, and PPR projects will be expected to provide annual updates to NIFA and FNS on the progress and outcomes of their project self-evaluation including a final self-evaluation report at the conclusion of their grant project. If FIP, FLSP, or PPR grantees wish to significantly change their project self-evaluation, then they must first notify and receive approval from NIFA and FNS. Due to their increased scale and sophistication, more rigorous standards will be applied to the USDA assessment of FLSP and PPR projects self-evaluations.

## **PART II—AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Available Funding**

The anticipated amount available for NIFA support of this program in FY 2019 is approximately \$41 million for the GusNIP projects (FPP, FIP, FSLP, PPR, & NTAE). The funds will be awarded through a grant and, in the case of the Centers, through a competitive cooperative agreement. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment (ASAP) system, operated by the Department of Treasury's Bureau of the Fiscal Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see [Automated Standard Application for Payments](#).

### **B. Types of Applications**

In FY 2019, you may submit applications to the GusNIP, the Produce Prescription, and the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers:

**New application:** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the GusNIP. We will review all new applications competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

**Resubmitted application (applies to GusNIP only this year):** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the GusNIP Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

### **C. Project Types**

Applications will be accepted for five (5) project types: (1) GusNIP Pilot Projects; (2) GusNIP Projects; (3) GusNIP Large-Scale Projects; (4) Produce Prescription; and (5) Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers. With the exception of produce prescription, the FINI grant program will only accept one application across the five project types per project team under this RFA. For the Produce Prescription, this program cannot be combined with FINI in the same proposal, but applicants may apply for a separate FINI grant in addition to the Program Prescription. It is important to keep these two types of programs separate due to the different criteria used in the application process.

All FPP awards will be made on the merit of the proposed project, with budgets considered only after the merits of the project have been determined. NIFA reserves the right to negotiate final budgets with successful applicants.

#### **1. GusNIP Pilot Projects (FPP)**

FPPs are aimed at new entrants seeking funding for a project in the early stages of incentive

program development. Applicants should request a budget commensurate with the proposed project. No single GusNIP Pilot project (FPP) award will exceed \$100,000 for the total project period. The maximum GusNIP Pilot Project award period is one year. Applications that exceed the budgetary guidelines will not be reviewed.

## **2. GusNIP Projects (FIP)**

FINI Projects are aimed at mid-sized groups developing incentive programs at the local or State level. Applicants should request a budget and project period commensurate with the proposed project. FIP proposals must include a budget of no more than \$500,000 for a project period not to exceed four years. Proposal budgets may be less than \$500,000 and/or a proposed project period of less than four years. Applications that exceed budgetary guidelines will not be reviewed.

## **3. GusNIP Large Scale Projects (FLSP)**

FLSPs are aimed at groups developing multi-county, state-wide, and regional incentive programs with the largest target audience of all GusNIP projects. Applicants should request a budget and project period commensurate with the proposed project. FLSP proposals must include a budget of \$500,000 or more for a project period not to exceed four years. Applicants may submit a proposed project period of less than four years.

## **4. Produce Prescription (PPR)**

PPR are aimed at groups developing county, multi-county, and state-wide programs, partnering with one or more healthcare entities. The purpose of the PPR is to conduct projects that demonstrate and evaluate the impact of the projects on a) the improvement of dietary health through increased consumption of fruits and vegetables; b) the reduction of individual and household food insecurity; and c) the reduction in healthcare use and associated costs. Applicants should request a budget and project period commensurate with the proposed project. Ten percent of the total funding is allocated towards the PPR projects; for 2019 the total is \$4.5 million. No match is required for this project.

Eligible participants for PPR include:

An individual eligible for (1) benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.); or (2) medical assistance under a State plan or a waiver of such a plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) and enrolled under such plan or waiver; and (3) a member of a low-income household that suffers from, or is at risk of developing, a diet-related health condition.

## **5. Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (NTAE)**

NITAE centers are aimed at developing and providing services related to grants under the GusNIP and the Produce Prescription programs, including offering incentive program training and technical assistance to applicants and grantees to the extent practicable. Program training and technical assistance may include:

- collecting and providing information on best practices;

- creating a system to collect and compile core data measures for existing projects;
- compiling project data from grantees,
- coordinating communication between the center, grantees, applicants, and evaluators/researchers;
- beginning in fiscal year 2020, generating e an annual report to Congress on grant outcomes; and
- creating and maintaining a publicly accessible online site that makes annual reports and incentive program information available in an anonymized format that protects confidential, personal, and other sensitive data.

Applicants should request a budget and project period commensurate with the proposed project. Under 2018 Farm Bill, the aggregate authorized amount for GusNIP for FY 2019 and 2020 is \$17 million and \$7 million for each of the fiscal years 2021 through 2023. The amount available under this FY 2019 RFA is \$8.5 Million. No match is required for this program.

## **PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Applications may only be submitted by government agencies and non-profit organizations. Award recipients may sub-award to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

#### **1. FPP, FIP, FLSP, & PPR Eligible Entity**

Eligibility to receive this grant is limited to government agencies and non-profit organizations (FCEA, § 4405(b)(2)(A)). Eligible government agencies and non-profit organizations may include: an emergency feeding organization; an agricultural cooperative; a producer network or association; a community health organization; a public benefit corporation; an economic development corporation; a farmers' market; a community-supported agriculture program; a buying club; a SNAP-authorized retailer (firm); and a State, local, or tribal agency. All applicants must demonstrate in their application that they are a government agency or non-profit organization.

To be eligible to receive a FPP, FIP, FLSP, & PPR grant, applicants must propose projects that: (1) would increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers participating in SNAP or in the PPR program according to PPR eligibility, by providing incentives at the point of purchase; (2) operate through authorized SNAP firms, and comply with all relevant SNAP regulations and operating requirements; (3) agree to participate in the GusNIP comprehensive program evaluation; (4) ensure that the same terms and conditions apply to purchases made by individuals with SNAP benefits and with incentives under the FINI grant program as apply to purchases made by individuals who are not members of households receiving benefits as provided in 7 C.F.R. 278.2(b); and (5) include effective and efficient technologies for benefit redemption systems that may be replicated in other States and communities.

Note: Because the statutory language of the 2018 Farm Bill requires GusNIP grantees to provide incentives specifically to SNAP clients, the equal treatment provision of 7 CFR 278.2(b) does not apply to GusNIP grantees for the purpose of providing incentives under the GusNIP grant.

In addition, applicants must meet the following requirements to receive a FPP, FIP, FLSP, & PPR grant: (1) have experience in: (i) efforts to reduce food insecurity in the community, including food distribution, improving access to services, or coordinating services and programs; or (ii) experience with the SNAP program; (2) demonstrated competency to implement a project, provide fiscal accountability, collect data, and prepare reports and other necessary documentation; and (3) possess a demonstrated willingness to share information with researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and other interested parties, including a plan for dissemination of results to stakeholders. Projects are encouraged to provide employees with important job skills. Additionally, applicants are encouraged to have experience in the following areas: (i) community food work, particularly concerning small and medium-sized farms, including the provision of food to people in low-

income communities and the development of new markets in low-income communities for agricultural producers; and (ii) job training and business development activities for food-related activities in low-income communities.

*Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers Eligible Entity.* Eligibility to receive this cooperative agreement is limited to nongovernmental organizations; State cooperative extension services; regional food systems centers; Federal, State, or Tribal agencies; and Institutions of higher education (as defined in section 101 (a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001 (a))).

In general to receive this cooperative agreement and carry out the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers, the Secretary may, on a competitive basis, enter into one or more cooperative agreements with one or more organizations with expertise in developing outcome-based reporting, at least one of which has expertise in the food insecurity nutrition incentive program and at least one of which has expertise in produce prescription projects.

## **2. Partners and Collaborators**

Applicants for FPP, FIP, FLSP, PPR and NTAE awards are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, non-profit or for-profit entities, including links with academic institutions (including minority-serving colleges and universities) and/or other appropriate professionals; community-based organizations; and local government entities; and/or partnering entities for the purposes of providing additional resources and strengthening under-resourced communities. An eligible entity carrying out a Produce Prescription Program must partner with one or more healthcare partners to support the work. Only the applicant must meet the requirements specified above for grant eligibility. Project partners and collaborators need not meet the eligibility requirements. When planning collaborations award recipients may sub-award to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the successful completion of the project. See Part IV, D., Funding Restrictions.

*Fiscal Agent.* If a non-profit organization cannot accept Federal funds directly, a letter must be included in the application stating that in the event the application results in an award, the award funds must be administered through a fiscal agent organization on their behalf. This agent must be identified in the letter from the applicant and the letter must be countersigned by an authorized representative of the fiscal agent organization. The letter must include the fiscal agent's point of contact, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address. This letter is to be included as an attachment to Field 12, Other Attachments (Part IV.B.3.c.) of the application. In the event an application is recommended for funding, NIFA will request that both the applicant institution/organization and the fiscal agent organization submit complete management information (see Part V, D.). Include documents showing the organization's non-profit status when responding to this request.

### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

FPP, FIP, and FLSP, applicants **MUST** provide matching contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis for all Federal funds awarded. **PPR and NTAE applicants do not need to provide matching**

**contributions.** Match must be documented for all project years at the time the application is submitted. FPP, FIP, and FLSP grantees may meet the match requirement through cash and/or in-kind contributions, including third-party in-kind contributions fairly evaluated, including facilities, equipment, or services.

Tribal agencies: Tribal agency grantees may use funds provided to the Indian Tribe of the Tribal agency through a Federal agency (including the Indian Health Service) or other Federal benefit to satisfy all or part of the non-federal share described if such use is otherwise consistent with the purpose of such funds.

The non-Federal share of the funding may come from State government, local government, or private sources. Federal money cannot be used to match except for Tribal agencies, described above. Examples of qualifying matching contributions may include direct costs such as: rent for office space used exclusively for the funded project; duplication or postage costs; and staff time from an entity other than the applicant for job training or nutrition education.

Note that if an applicant partners with a for-profit entity, the non-Federal share that is required to be provided by the applicant may not include the services of an employee of that for-profit entity, including salaries or expenses covered by that employer. 7 USC 7157(b)(1)(D)(ii)

## **PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

### **A. Electronic Application Package**

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For information about the pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see [Grants 101](#).

#### **New Users of Grants.gov**

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative, or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed PRIOR to submitting an application. It can take as long as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“Register,” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to [Grants Register](#)), for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Part II, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer to item 2, below, to locate the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

#### **Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials**

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of [Adobe Reader](#) compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/download-application-package.html> and enter the funding opportunity number

#### **Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-FINI-006771**

Click “Search.” On the displayed page, click the corresponding link to continue. A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may move forms amongst different Grant Application Packages but you may ONLY submit an application to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

**If you require assistance to access the application package** (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application**, refer to resources available on the Grants.gov website (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html>). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support

800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [federal holidays](#).

Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Grants.gov iPortal (see <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>):

Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. EST).

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

## **B. Content and Form of Application Submission**

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A of this part). The following is **additional information** you need to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

**Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III, Section 3 of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or whether attachments are in PDF format; see Part III, Section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).**

**For any questions related to the preparation of an application**, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: [electronic@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:electronic@nifa.usda.gov)
- Phone: 202-401-5048

- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding [federal holidays](#).

### **1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. See Part V, Section 2.18 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

### **2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)**

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 3 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

### **3. R&R Other Project Information Form**

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

#### **a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.**

The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of **GusNIP**. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

#### **b. Field 8. Project Narrative.**

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed **10 pages** of written text, regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced, and up to **5 additional pages** for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (**15 pages**) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

#### **1. GusNIP Pilot Projects, GusNIP Projects, GusNIP Large Scale Projects, and PPR projects**

The Project Narrative for GusNIP Pilot Projects (FPPs), GusNIP Projects (FIPs), GusNIP Large Scale Projects (FLSPs), and Produce Prescription Projects (PPR) must include the headings below in bold followed by the response for each of the points noted below.

- a) The Community to be involved in the Project and the Needs to be Addressed.** Identify and succinctly describe the critical elements and needs of the local food economy or food system, including demographics, income, and geographic characteristics of the area or community to be served and how the community might benefit from an incentive project. Beyond a recitation of statistics, applications should describe local capabilities and assets, such as those identified in a community food assessment, and the involvement of low-income communities in the context of project activities and operations.

PPR applicants need to address how they will verify participants in the Produce Prescription program according to eligibility and the primary health issues of the target audience to be served. In addition, the background information and rationale of the healthcare partners selected to work on the project need to be included in this section.

Note the main targets or beneficiaries of the project and the community/ health needs and opportunities being addressed. The needs addressed should directly relate to project goals and the objectives described below. It is recommended that this section be no more than one and one-half page.

- b) The Organizations and Communities Involved in the Project.** List the organizations and communities to be involved in carrying out the proposed project. Include a description of the relevant experience of each community group, organization, or healthcare entity, including the applicant organization that will be involved, and any related project history in a management plan. Proposals should demonstrate community linkages and coalitions as appropriate. The qualifications of staff involved with the proposed project and/or organizational leadership should reflect the expertise necessary to carry out the proposed project activities or similar types of activities. Specify the degree to which paid and volunteer staff will be utilized. Experience in and connections with the community will be considered as important as academic or professional credentials in this regard.

To the extent practicable, ensure that low-income residents are involved in planning; in particular, describe how the communities being served (particularly the targeted residents and organizations) have been or will be involved in planning the project and will be engaged in its implementation and evaluation process. Please reference planning activities, assessments, meetings, or other activities that demonstrate community/ healthcare input into key decision-making.

Letters from the key organizations involved in the project, acknowledging their support and contributions, must be provided. A limited number of additional support letters – such as those from farmers or partner organizations, where appropriate, are encouraged to provide evidence of broad community involvement in both planning and future decision-making. All support letters and/ or MOUs should be attached in Field 12, Other Attachments (See Part IV, B.3.c., below, Key Organization Support).

- c) Project Goals and Intended Outcomes.** List the goals and intended outcomes of the project, and how they contribute to the primary goal of the GusNIP. Outcomes should describe specific changes or results that will occur as a consequence of the project and that will constitute “success” for the initiative, including a general description of the range of fruits and vegetables that would be incentivized (such as, but not limited to, fresh, canned, or dried forms). Outcomes should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely, describe what will be accomplished, and who and how many people, e.g., residents, participants, will benefit. It is recommended that this section be no more than two pages.
- d) Activities to Achieve the Goals.** Discuss how the goals and intended outcomes will be achieved and include how the proposed activities comply with the rules and regulations of SNAP. Discuss how the proposed project outcomes will be realized by providing a systematic description of how the most important steps or milestones will be accomplished. Particular attention should be given to existing technical capabilities and any technical solutions that must be developed for goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved. In addition to these descriptions, it is recommended that a table of up to three pages be provided with implementation details for these activities, including: (a) specific steps and achievements in planning, implementing, and evaluating; (b) timetables for milestones, and,

as relevant; (c) expected numbers of participants involved in each step of the process. Describe how the proposed project will develop effective and efficient technologies for benefit redemption systems that may be replicated and scaled in other States and communities in the future. Most relevant is an explanation of why the applicant and its partners selected the activities proposed in the application.

- e) **Relationship to Program Objectives.** Discuss how the project and its proposed outcomes will address the objectives of the GusNIP as described in Part I § B of this RFA. Discuss the specific changes that will result among participants or in the communities served that address these GusNIP priorities. It is recommended that this section be no more than one page.
- f) **Evaluation.** Evaluation is a critical purpose of the GusNIP. By testing and evaluating various methods and technologies to increase the fruit and vegetable purchases and improving the nutrition and health status of participating households through the GusNIP, NIFA seeks to determine best practices, and the relative effectiveness of various incentive programs as well as benefit redemption methods. The evaluation requirements of the GusNIP, therefore, include both process (developing and monitoring indicators of progress towards objectives) and outcomes. Recognizing that GusNIP projects are likely to vary substantially in scale and maturity, and that grantees are likely to vary considerably in evaluation capacity and expertise, the evaluation requirements differ for each of the four grant categories (FPP, FIP, FLSP, & PPR). The GusNIP requires a project self-evaluation by each grantee and participation in the program evaluation conducted by the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers.

All GusNIP Pilot Projects (FPP) must include a process analysis, a self-assessment of their success in developing a viable project. FPPs will document the process, challenges, and success of implementation and operations. Because these projects are in the earliest stages of development that do not offer a fair test of their potential effectiveness, limited information will be reported to the independent evaluator. FPPs must provide preliminary results of their self-assessment in the annual report to NIFA and to provide the information to the NTAE centers.

All GusNIP Projects (FIP) must include a process analysis, a self-assessment of their success in developing and operating a viable project. FIPs will document the process, challenges, and success of implementation and operations. The process assessment should contain enough timely information over the course of the project to improve program outcomes. FIPs must provide preliminary results of their self-assessment in the annual report to NIFA and to the NTAE centers. In addition, because of their expected scope, FIPs will be required to cooperate with the NTAE center.

All GusNIP Large-Scale Projects (FLSP) must include (1) a process assessment that documents the process, challenges, and success of implementation and operations and (2) an outcome assessment that documents the project's effectiveness in increasing fruit and vegetable purchases among SNAP participants. The process assessment should contain enough timely information over the course of the project to measure program outcomes. Preliminary results must be included in the annual report to NIFA and to the NTAE center. Outcome self-assessments must follow guidelines developed by the NTAE centers

collaboration with grantees to ensure an appropriate level of comparability of methods, outcomes, and measures. In addition, because of their expected scale and maturity, FLSPs will be required to cooperate with the NTAE centers.

All Produce Prescription projects (PPR) must include (1) a process analysis, a self-assessment of their success in developing and operating a viable project. PPRs will document the process, challenges, and successes of implementation and operations and (2) an outcome assessment that documents the project's effectiveness in increasing fruit and vegetable purchases among eligible participants in the Produce Prescription project. Preliminary results shall be included in the annual report of NIFA and the NTAE centers. Outcome self-assessments must follow guidelines developed by the NTAE centers collaboration with grantees to ensure an appropriate level of comparability of methods, outcomes, and measures. In addition, because of their expected scale and maturity, the PPRs will be required to cooperate with the NTAE centers.

**g.) Logic model.** In order to allow for sufficient evaluation of projects as described, it is recommended that applicants set aside between five and ten percent of the total project budget for evaluation purposes. Applicants should seek the help of academic or other experts in evaluation design and implementation, as appropriate and available. A logic model or chart is required. It is recommended that this section be no more than one page. See [Logic Model Planning Process](#).

## **2. Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers**

The Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers must include the headings below in bold followed by the response for each of the points noted below.

**Introduction.** The introduction must include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) of the proposed center. Show evidence that the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (grantees, grocers, farmers, health professionals, researchers, incentive program managers, and the employees of the Department of Agriculture with direct experience with implementation of existing incentive program in the design of the instrument through which future data will be collected and the method of reporting) was involved in the conceptualizing the center and the designated activities. Site previous work accomplished in GusNIP or Produce Prescription programs and similar work accomplished in the past.

- a) Objectives and Outcomes.** Concisely present the goals, associated objectives and expected outputs and outcomes of the center in relation to the audience and needs identified in the introduction. Discuss the geographic region to be served, or the number of project directors, potential project directors and applicants served across the country. Discuss whether and how this program can be adapted to other regions, communities, and the types of GusNIP projects involved such as the GusNIP Pilot Projects, the GusNIP Projects, the GusNIP Large Scale Projects, and the Produce Prescription Projects.
- b) Approach.** The activities proposed to achieve each objective must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:

- (i) A description of the activities proposed for each objective.
  - (ii) A timeline of the proposed project. The timeline should include activities and major outputs and associated outcomes for each year of the project.
  - (iii) Discuss how and where the activities will be provided and the appropriateness of the approach for the target audience.
  - (iv) For GusNIP Projects and the Produce Prescription: how will the Project Directors, co-Project Directors, and evaluators be recruited for training? Discuss the types of training materials to be utilized and how they will be adapted for the geographic regions of the country and develop bilingual and culturally appropriate training resources used for GusNIP and PPR grantees.
  - (v) Discuss how you will collect and provide information on best practices that may include communications, signage, record keeping, incentive instruments, development and integration of point of sale systems, and reporting.
  - (vi) Discuss how you will collect and provide information and assist with collaboration among grantee projects, applicable State agencies, and nutrition education programs.
  - (vii) Discuss how you will communicate between grantees/ applicants, evaluators/researchers, the Department of Agriculture and applicable State agencies.
  - (viii) Discuss how you intend to provide support for the development of best practices for produce prescription projects and the sharing of information among eligible entities and healthcare providers that participate in a produce prescription project.
- c) **Personnel and Resources.** Describe in detail the Key Personnel’s experience in serving the identified or other audiences of the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program and the ability to provide effective education, training, outreach, mentoring, and evaluation assistance for the identified audience. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed center, and their impacts. The information may include: the years and locations of prior activities; number of training and technical assistance activities provided along with evaluation activities carried out; the success rate of the training and technical assistance provided and the types of evaluation outcomes and impacts.
- d) **Plan for Outcome Based Reporting.** Clearly identify a minimum of two (2) expected project specific outcomes within the life of the center, and explain the plan to document and evaluate these outcomes. Explain how you intend to create a system to collect and compile core data sets from eligible entities that:
- (i) uses standard metrics with consideration of outcome measures for existing projects;
  - (ii) includes to the extent practicable grocers, farmers, health professionals, researchers, incentive program managers, and employees of the Department of Agriculture with direct experience with implementation of existing incentive programs in the design of the instrument through which data will be collected and the mechanism for reporting; compiles project data from grantees, and beginning in fiscal year 2020 generates an annual report to Congress on the grant outcomes including:
    - a. the results of the projects; and
    - b. the amount of grant funds used for the project; and
  - (iii) creates and maintains a publicly accessible online-site that makes annual reports and incentive program information available in an anonymized format that protects confidential, personal, or other sensitive data.

Because of the diversity of the types of programs in GusNIP, it is not possible to require all applicants to report on identical measurable outcomes and the Produce Prescription program

will have different indicators measuring the goals and objectives of the program. However, all GusNIP applicants should consider using their outcomes that measure fruit and vegetable consumption, the amount of dollars spent on incentives at the farmers' markets and grocery retail, the amount of incentives redeemed at the farmers' markets and grocery retail, and the number of incentive firms in the state to name a few of the possible indicators that the centers may request.

- e) **Management and Collaboration Plan.** It is critical to have a clearly articulated management plan that describes the roles and functions of all partners, collaborators, and the organizations, as the related to the proposed center. Strong partnerships with complementary organizations with shared leadership and vision are essential to the success of GusNIP and the centers. Include the time allocated by each partner for the attainment of the objectives; key roles of each partner and collaborator; and plan for the administration of the proposed center, the implementation phase, and its partnerships. Describe in detail the plans for the coordination, communication, data-sharing and reporting among the members of the project team and the stakeholder groups. Describe the commitment of the organization and partners to the center; and how the collaboration and its impact will be sustained beyond the life of the award. An applicant's failure to provide the requested information in the Management and Collaboration Plan may preclude NIFA from making an award.
  
- f) **Logic model.** In order to allow for sufficient evaluation of projects as described, it is recommended that applicants set aside between five and ten percent of the total project budget for evaluation purposes. Applicants should seek the help of academic or other experts in evaluation design and implementation, as appropriate and available. A logic model or chart is required. It is recommended that this section be no more than one page. See [Logic Model Planning Process](#).

**Table 2:** Comprehensive GusNIP Program Evaluation Table

| <b>Project Type</b> | <b>Project Self-Evaluation</b>        | <b>Comprehensive Program Evaluation</b>  |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| FPP                 | Process evaluation                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required to participate</li> <li>• Participation includes providing self- assessment and provide information to the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, &amp; Information Center</li> </ul> |
| FIP                 | Process & outcome evaluation          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required to participate</li> <li>• Contribute to minimum core data set</li> <li>• Collaborate with the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center</li> </ul>                |
| FLSP                | Self-evaluation (process and outcome) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required to participate</li> <li>• Contribute to minimum core data set</li> <li>• Collaborate with the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center</li> </ul>                |
| PPR                 | Self-evaluation (process and outcome) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required to participate</li> <li>• Contribute data as determined by Federal Agencies, grantees, and the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center</li> </ul>               |

*Comprehensive GusNIP Program Evaluation.* The evaluation is expected to be based on a cluster evaluation model that builds on the collaboration and coordination of individual project assessments and an overall program evaluation. It is expected to consist of four components: a process analysis to describe project implementation and support future replication of successful approaches, an outcome analysis to assess the effectiveness of each FIP, FLSP, and PPR program, a comparative analysis to integrate results across sites and approaches, attempting to answer the question of what works best (and when or where), and *technical assistance* to support consistent implementation of evaluation protocols used by grantees/researchers.

All FIPs, FLSPs, and PPRs will be required to cooperate with the NTAE center by:

- Supporting implementation of evaluation requirements;
- Meeting periodically with staff from NIFA, FNS, the NTAE centers, and other GusNIP grantees to review project plans, evaluation objectives and methods, data collection and reporting requirements, and analysis and reporting of results;

- Facilitating access to or providing documentation of project implementation, operations, costs, and outcomes; and
- Facilitating site visits and interviews with project staff, partners and program participants if necessary.

FIPs, FLSPs, and PPRs will be required to periodically provide the NTAE centers a core program data set to ensure common program tracking and enable meaningful comparisons across all projects. The core program data set includes the following:

*Site and Project Information*

- Management or organizational structure of the program
- Financial instrument used for SNAP and incentive purchases (tokens, scrip, electronic, etc.)
- Retail locations, mobile routes, or other pertinent information to understand how the project improves access to healthy food for underserved, low-income consumers
- Months of operation and operating days and hours
- Whether it is a new SNAP incentive program or the continuation, expansion, or modification of an existing program
- Whether program sites accept other nutrition assistance program benefits
- Whether program sites collaborate with nutrition education programs or offer other experiential nutrition education activities
- Expenses associated with establishment and operations of the program

*Incentive Program Information*

- Fruit and vegetable products eligible for incentives
- Incentive level (ratio and maximum)
- Incentive delivery mechanism
- Number of eligible participants (per site/per year)
- Dollar value of SNAP purchases (per site/per year)
- Number of SNAP transactions (per site/per year)
- Dollar value of incentives issued (per site/per year)
- Dollar value of incentives redeemed (per site/per year)
- Average incentive value redeemed per recipient (weekly/monthly/annually)

Grantees are required to have a Data Use Agreement or a MOU with each firm or sub-grantee that guarantees each firm will provide information required for the core program data set and to complete an outlet survey of firms to be conducted by the NTAE center.

Proposals should discuss any opportunities and challenges with the evaluation requirements and how they will be addressed. Proposals should also describe any previous process, outcome, and impact evaluation experience with SNAP participants or other related food programs. The proposal should demonstrate the capacity and willingness to comply with the evaluation requirements.

- g.) Specific Program and Incentive Information.** Provide a detailed description of the way incentives will be handled in your grant project and the firms that will participate in your grant project. Please be sure to include information responsive to this section

as a clear and discrete section of your proposal (do not reference other sections or charts located elsewhere in your proposal). Please include the following information in this section:

- The type and number of SNAP authorized firms that will be involved in your grant project (e.g., small brick and mortar stores, farmers' markets) – additional information regarding SNAP store types is available in the [2016 FINI Q&A](#).
- The number of months and days that the project, if funded, will operate (e.g., a project at a seasonal farmers' market that will operate from June 15 through October 15).
- The products eligible to be purchased to trigger receipt of incentives at the point of sale (e.g., all GusNIP qualifying fruits and/or vegetables, only fresh and local GusNIP qualifying fruits and/or vegetables)
- The products eligible to be received at the point of incentive redemption (e.g., all GusNIP qualifying fruits and/or vegetables, only fresh and local GusNIP qualifying fruits and/or vegetables).
- The incentive levels and dosage (e.g., ratio of SNAP spent to incentive earned, maximum incentive dollar amount that can be earned per day).
- The financial instrument used for incentive delivery (e.g., tokens, scrip, gift card, electronic).
- The methods that will be used to track SNAP households' grant project participation (e.g., a store loyalty card issued to each participant).
- Indicate if the proposal is a new incentive program or a continuation, expansion, or modification of an existing program.
- Indicate if nutrition education or other interventions will be combined with the incentive.
- List where the project and sub-grantee projects will operate.
- Indicate if any special waivers will be requested or required and what the waivers will include.
- Provide the firm names, street addresses, and FNS numbers for all of the identified SNAP authorized firms that will participate in your grant project.
- Indicate if there are any identified firms that are not yet SNAP authorized, include the firm names and street addresses; if any of these firms are currently undergoing the SNAP authorization process please also include those firms' FNS numbers.
- Indicate if the project anticipates new firms that are not currently SNAP authorized, include the firm names and street addresses.
- As stated in Part I – Funding Opportunity Description D. Program Policy, before any firm can participate in your GusNIP grant project you must do the following:
  1. If the firm is not already SNAP authorized, the firm applies for and obtains [SNAP Authorization](#);
  2. The grantee and firm sign a MOU;
  3. The firm submits the signed MOU to the [SNAP Retailer Service Center](#) (see Part I § D of this RFA);
  4. The grantee submits to FNS the firm's information (i.e., FNS number, firm name, firm address); and,
  5. FNS responds within 30 calendar days to approve or deny the participation of the firm.

This entire process may take 60 calendar days, so it is important that GusNIP grantees work closely with their firms to ensure that this firm approval process is not delayed.

More information is available regarding this process online at: [FINI Grant Program](#)

- Indicate if the project anticipates making any technical enhancements to the firms, EBT, or other systems. Provide a high-level description of any such proposed technical enhancements and page number(s) in the proposal indicating where a detailed description of technical enhancements is found.

Proposals must include the detailed information described in Part IV § B(3)(b)(2)(f), Specific Program and Incentive Information. This requirement enables the reviewers and the independent evaluator easily pull and use the information.

**h.) Sustainability.** Describe which aspects or components of the project will continue beyond the end of the project period, discuss how an infusion of Federal funds will be sufficient for the proposed project to advance local capacity-building and achieve sustainability. Projects may identify actual or potential funding sources for continuation of the project. Applicants should differentiate between how the basic elements of the project will be continued versus how the low-income community will be changed and its capacity advanced.

Projects should provide evidence, e.g., a market analysis or the outline of a management business plan, to demonstrate that it is likely to become successful in meeting GusNIP grant program goals. Business plan outlines or any other documentation of evidence for sustainability should be no more than five pages and should be included as an appendix. Such evidence should be included as an Other Attachment, Field 12 (see Part IV.B.3.c.).

**i.) Non-supplantation.** Grants must be used to supplement, not supplant, non-Federal funds that would otherwise be available for expenditure on incentive program activities. Grant funds must be used to fund new projects, or expand or enhance existing projects. They may not be used to replace State or local funds that would, in the absence of Federal aid, be available or forthcoming for incentive programs.

**c. Field 12. Add Other Attachments. All attachments must be in PDF format.**

See Part V. Section 4.12 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Field 12 on the form) for instructions for this field.

- *Key Organization Support.* Attach signed letters of support from the State SNAP agency if there is an interaction with or modifications of EBT systems and any other key organizations involved in the project acknowledging their support, contributions and commitment; title the attachment 'Key Organization Support'. Provide evidence of broad community involvement in both planning and decision-making. This section is limited to two page letters of support for each key organization.
- *Matching Funds Documentation.* For FPP, FIP, and FLSP applicants only, this grant program requires applicants to match Federal funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources as described in Part III, B.
- *Appendices to Project Narrative.* Title the attachment as 'Appendices' in the document header and save file as 'Appendices'. Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of **appendices must not exceed seven (7) pages** and should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

- *Logic Model*. Title the attachment as ‘Logic Model’ in the document header and save file as ‘LogicModel’.
- *Fiscal Agent Letter*. See Part III A. 2. If it is necessary to include a fiscal agent letter, then title the attachment as ‘Fiscal Agent’ in the document header and save file as ‘FiscalAgent’. Include documents showing the applicant’s non-profit status here.

*Data Management Plan*. A Data Management Plan (DMP) is required. The DMP should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see Part V § B of this RFA.). See Part III Section 3.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for NIFA attachment specifications. The requirements for preparation and inclusion of a DMP in your application is included at: [Data Management Plan for NIFA-Funded Research, Education, and Extension Projects](#). Also included on the web page are FAQs and information about accessing examples of DMPs.

#### **4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)**

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the guide includes instructions about senior/key person profile requirements, and details about the biographical sketch and the current and pending support, including a link to a suggested template for the current and pending support.

#### **5. R&R Personal Data**

As noted in Part V, 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. Part V.6 also notes the importance and use of the information.

#### **6. R&R Budget**

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

*Cost sharing or Matching*. As stated in Part III § B of this RFA, matching funds are only mandatory for FFP, FIP, and FLSP. The R&R Budget (“Fed/Non-Fed”) form must be utilized. For grants that require matching funds as specified under Part III § B of this RFA, the Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match as well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement). However, you are still subject to documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, etc. as specified in 2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance),” 7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions,” and program-specific regulations, as applicable. In instances where match is required, any resulting award will require the signature of an Authorized Representative. Only when NIFA receives the award signed by the AR will award funds be released and available for drawdown.

## Indirect Costs.

For further information and instructions regarding indirect costs, refer to Part V, section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. For indirect cost funding restrictions, refer to Part IV § D of this RFA.

## 7. Supplemental Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part VI, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

### a. Field 2. Program to which you are applying.

**Table 3:** Description of Program Names and Codes

| Program Code Name   | Program Code |
|---|--------------|
| GusNIP Pilot Projects   | FPP          |
| GusNIP Projects   | FIP          |
| GusNIP Large Scale Projects   | FLSP         |
| Produce Prescription Projects   | PPR          |
| Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Centers | NTAE         |

**Note:** Accurate entry of the program code is critical for proper and timely processing of an application.

### b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

## 8. Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

This is a required form for corporate applicants. See Part VI, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for a description of the term, “corporation,” and detailed information related to the questions on this form.

## C. Submission Dates and Times

We recommend that you conduct an administrative review of the application before submission of it via Grants.gov to ensure that it complies with all preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review. While you should use the checklist to check the application for completeness, the application should be checked for the following required item(s). The list includes:

- Logic Model
- Data Sharing Agreement
- Current and Pending Support

This is not an exhaustive list of required items; it only serves to highlight items that may be overlooked. Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications are due by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on June 10, 2019**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should **FIRST** contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV.A for Grants.gov contact information. We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. We strongly encourage you to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence from NIFA regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of this RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, you should cite this number on all future correspondence.

## **D. Funding Restrictions**

### **1. Indirect Costs**

Applicants may request full indirect costs, subject to statutory limitations. In order to do so, the applicant must use the current negotiated indirect cost rate established by its cognizant Federal agency (the agency that provides the most funds). If awarded, the applicant will be required to produce a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement from the cognizant agency in order to recover indirect costs. If unable to obtain a negotiated rate from its cognizant agency, the applicant is not permitted indirect cost reimbursement. Rather, the applicant may only be reimbursed for allowable direct costs. Violation of cost accounting principles is not permitted when re-budgeting or charging costs to awards. Rather, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs.

If the applicant wants full indirect costs, but does not have a negotiated rate, and NIFA is the cognizant agency, the applicant must calculate an indirect cost rate in order to request indirect costs. Several sample indirect cost rate calculations are provided on NIFA's indirect cost webpage located at: [http://nifa.usda.gov/business/indirect\\_cost\\_process.html](http://nifa.usda.gov/business/indirect_cost_process.html). During the application process, the applicant is not required to complete the entire indirect cost package identified on NIFA's website. Rather, the applicant need only calculate an indirect cost rate to serve as a basis for requesting indirect costs. If awarded, the applicant will be required to submit a complete Indirect Cost Proposal (ICP) package in order to obtain a negotiated rate as explained on NIFA's indirect cost website.

### **2. Sub-award Restriction**

The applicant is expected to perform a substantive portion of the project and no more than 33 percent of FPP, FIP, FLSP, and PPR, and 50% for the NTAE centers as determined by budget expenditures, may be sub-awarded. NIFA will allow applicants to indicate in their proposal if they intend to sub-award more than 33% of the award for FPP, FIP, FLSP, and PPR projects or subcontract more than 50% of the award for NTAE centers. This deviation will require NIFA approval. Projects may divide their budget allocations between partners as it fits their work plan. (For additional knowledge or expertise that is not available within the applicant organization,

funds for expert consultation may be included in the “All Other Direct Costs” section of the proposed budget.)

### **3. Multiple Submissions**

The GusNIP will only accept one application for GusNIP across the four project types per project team under this RFA. A separate application for PPR and GusNIP may be submitted.

### **4. Funding Period Limitation**

The maximum potential funding period for FPP, FIP, FLSP, and NTAE centers (including any awards transferred from another institution or organization) is limited to 4 years in duration. PPR awards are limited to 3 years in duration. The funding period will commence on the effective date cited in the award instrument. Any such limitation also applies to sub-awards made under awards subject to a funding period limitation.

### **5. Allowable Forms of Project Promotion**

GusNIP grantees may promote or advertise their GusNIP grant projects using Federal and/or match funds using any mass media (e.g., television, radio, billboards, and geographically targeted online social media advertisements). Such mass media advertisement will only be allowable if they are utilized in geographic areas (e.g., census tracts) where more than 12% of the population receives SNAP benefits. The use of mass media advertisements in areas with SNAP enrollment below the national average would constitute an inefficient usage of Federal grant funds. Please visit this [FNS website](#), it provides a breakdown of SNAP enrollment by Congressional District. Regardless of format, however, promotional activities funded with Federal and/or match funds:

- must present factual statements intended to inform, not to persuade,
- may include locational information about firms (i.e., the address of firms participating in the grantee's project),
- may also specify that firms accept SNAP and EBT (this includes appropriate logo use as outlined here: [Using the SNAP Logo](#), and
- may include information describing the mechanics of the grantee's project (e.g., spend \$1 on fruits or vegetables and earn \$1 to spend on more fruits or vegetables).

Under no circumstances may GusNIP grantees engage in any activities intended to persuade or recruit individuals to apply for SNAP benefits. The use of Federal and/or match funds to employ personnel tasked with enrolling individuals in SNAP is strictly prohibited. Allowable promotional activities must be limited to factual statements and GusNIP grantees must generally avoid emotional appeals in their promotional activities.

Pursuant to this change to GusNIP policy, a television, radio, or billboard advertisement that stated the following would be an allowable expense:

"Fresh fruits and vegetables are 50% off when you shop with your EBT card at the Main Street Farmers Market. The market is open all day every Wednesday and Friday on the corner of Maple and Elm Streets."

The following example, however, would still be an unallowable expense regardless of format:

"Sign up to receive SNAP benefits and then you can also get 50% off fresh fruits and

vegetables at the Main Street Farmers Market! Eating fruits and vegetables will keep you and your family healthy and happy, so come on down to the market every Wednesday and Friday on the corner of Maple and Elm Streets!"

Any promotional activity that is considered unallowable may only be paid for only with a third stream of funds (i.e., neither Federal, nor match funds). If you are unclear as to whether a specific promotional material is acceptable it can be submitted to [FINI@fns.usda.gov](mailto:FINI@fns.usda.gov) for review by FNS.

Grant funds, including Federal and match funds, still may not be utilized for actual recruitment activities that directly encourage or assist individuals in applying for or obtaining SNAP benefits. Costs associated with actual recruitment activities remain unallowable.

*State Flexibilities in Project Promotion.* State SNAP Agencies are strongly encouraged to assist GusNIP grantees in their area. State SNAP Agencies can help by promoting incentives to SNAP households. For example, GusNIP promotional material may inform SNAP recipients on how GusNIP works, the location of participating firm, and where to get additional information.

Examples of allowable promotional activities include:

- Making GusNIP grant promotional materials available at local SNAP offices;
- Allowing promotional videos to be played at local SNAP offices; or
- The State Agency sending grantees' promotional materials through direct mail to area SNAP recipients. However, State Agencies may not provide GusNIP grantees with a list of SNAP recipients' mailing addresses, even under a MOU.

## **6. Funding Allocation**

GusNIP grant projects must primarily provide financial incentives at the point of sale to induce SNAP recipients to purchase more qualifying vegetables or fruits. As a result, a minimum of 51% of total grant funds (Federal + match) must be budgeted to and spent on incentives. For PPR, it is a total of 51% of total Federal grant funds.

Project-related technology and systems development/improvement, as well as materials (including, but not limited to, changes to EBT systems, EBT equipment and service costs, changes to firm POS systems, tokens, etc.) may be a very important part of a GusNIP grant project. Such expenses may not exceed 25% of total grant funds (Federal + match). For PPR projects, it is a total of Federal grant funds.

Project promotion and advertising is essential to a successful GusNIP grant project. As a result, a minimum of 5% of the total grant funds (Federal + match) must be spent on project promotion. Such expenses, however, may not exceed 25% of total grant funds (Federal + match). For PPR projects it is a total of Federal grant funds.

Project administration and is important for a successful GusNIP grant project. As a result, a minimum of 5% of the total grant funds (Federal + match) must be spent on project administration that are direct charges to the award. This must include funds especially earmarked for recordkeeping and data collection to ensure that GusNIP grant projects may be audited. Such expenses, however, may not exceed 25% of total grant funds (Federal + match). For both PPR and NTAE, it is a total of Federal grant funds. Administration costs that are indirect in nature, and included in entities indirect cost pool, fall under the indirect cost rate.

Summary of GusNIP Funding Allocation Restrictions:

- Incentives  $\geq 51\%$
- Systems and materials  $\leq 25\%$
- $5\% \leq$  Promotion, Outreach, and Advertising  $\leq 25\%$
- $5\% \leq$  Administration (including recordkeeping and data collection)  $\leq 25\%$

**7. Prohibition of the Use of SNAP Administration Funds as Match**

SNAP State Agencies pay for 50% of the administration of SNAP and the Federal government pays for the other 50%. This 50% State SNAP administration cost cannot be used as matching funds for a GusNIP grant.

**E. Other Submission Requirements**

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, Section 1.9 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III, Section 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

## **PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. General**

We evaluate each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a technical review panel will evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors:

- the level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities;
- the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
- the need to include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs;
- the need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations;
- the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and
- the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of GusNIP will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review. GusNIP reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or with the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding. We will send copies of reviews, *not* including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the PD after the review process has been completed.

### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

A reviewer's written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. These written reviews are used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer review panel. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at the NIFA website: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications>. We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

**The following evaluation criteria applies to FPPs, FIPs, FLSPs, & PPRs competing within each category/project type and not across categories, listed in descending order of importance, to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:**

1. How well the proposed project advances the primary goal of the GusNIP which is to test and evaluate projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables (as defined in the RFA by low-income consumers participating in SNAP or eligible participants under the PPR program by providing incentives at the point of purchase, using effective and efficient benefit redemption technologies.

All GusNIP projects must: (1) aim to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers participating in SNAP or eligible participants under the PPR program, by providing incentives at the point of purchase; (2) operate through authorized and reported SNAP firms per Part I Section D titled “Program Policy”, and in compliance with all relevant SNAP regulations and operating requirements; (3) agree to participate in the GusNIP comprehensive program evaluation and facilitate participation through data collection and the use of Data Use Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding as outlined in Part IV Section B titled “Content and Form of Application Submission” and Part I Section D titled “Program Policy”; (4) ensure that the same terms and conditions apply to purchases made by individuals with SNAP benefits and with incentives provided under the GusNIP as apply to purchases made by individuals who are not members of households receiving benefits as provided in 7 C.F.R. 278.2(b); (5) include effective and efficient technologies for benefit redemption systems that may be replicated in other States and communities; and (6) applicants proposing projects that require interaction with or modification of EBT systems must submit a letter of support from applicable SNAP State Agencies as part of their grant application. All other applicants are encouraged to, but are not required to, submit letters of support from applicable SNAP State Agencies as part of their grant application.

2. How well the project aligns with and advances **GusNIP priorities**, which are to:
  - Maximize the share of funds used for direct incentives to participants; any grant proposal that includes non-financial incentives (e.g. giveaways of kitchen utensils or cookware) will be subject to providing additional justification prior to approval and would need to explain clearly how it contributes to the overall objectives of the GusNIP;
  - Test innovative or promising strategies that would contribute to our understanding of how best to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants, to inform future efforts;
  - Use direct-to-consumer sales marketing;
  - Involves a diversity of types of firms (e.g., convenience stores, supermarkets, farmers’ markets, etc.)
  - Demonstrate a track record of designing and implementing successful nutrition incentive programs that connect low-income consumers and agricultural producers (for FIPs, FLSPs, and PPR only);
  - Provide locally or regionally produced and fresh fruits and vegetables, especially those culturally appropriate for the target audience; and/or
  - Operate in underserved communities.

Identified priorities are factors that will be given additional weight in the evaluation of proposals. In instances where proposals are found to be equally meritorious with the application purpose and priorities, based on peer review, selection for funding will be weighed in favor of applicants meeting the GusNIP grant program priorities

3. If the grant requesting entity has received USDA grant awards in the past, then demonstrating a history of compliance with grant requirements will be considered when during the evaluation of awards.
4. The significance of the low-income food security issues that will be addressed by the proposed project, and an informative description of the community, its characteristics, assets, and needs, how well the proposed center fits the criteria outlined in the narrative and in the proposed management and budget plan;
5. The appropriateness of the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the project/center and how these goals will be achieved throughout the project period;
6. The relevance of the experience of the organizations that are involved in the proposed project/center including the applicant entity, and the type and extent of support that other organizations will be providing, or the extent to which these organizations demonstrate the capacity to contribute to the overall grant program. The applicant organization demonstrates a history of, commitment to, and/or direct involvement in food security or nutrition incentive projects in low-income communities or in communities with low- income groups, as well as success in actively engaging low-income participants, or potential applicants and grantees. The qualifications of staff involved with the proposed project and/or organizational leadership reflects the expertise necessary to carry out the proposed activities or similar types of activities. Experience in and connections with the community or grantees and a demonstrated dedication to serving low income residents will be considered as important as academic or professional credentials in this regard. Professional salaries are in balance with compensation given to low-income residents for their participation in the initiative;
7. The strength of the proposed project's plans and capacity to undertake a self-assessment, collect the minimum core data set (for FIPs, FLSPs, & PPRs only) with accuracy and validity, cooperate with and participate in the evaluation, share project results in an “exemplary practices” format (see Definition of ‘exemplary practices, page 49.);
8. Evidence is provided to demonstrate that the project is likely to become self-sustaining, e.g., a market analysis or the outlines of a business plan; and
9. The timeline and budget for accomplishing project goals, objectives, and outcomes is realistic and achievable.

**The following evaluation criteria will apply to NTAEs competing within each category/project type and not across categories, listed in descending order of importance, to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:**

- 1. Partnership and Collaboration Efforts-** To what extent does the application represent a substantial and effective collaborative network or partnership of public and/or private entities? Does the proposal include the necessary partners to meet the needs of the audience, and does it make appropriate use of the expertise and other strengths of each of the partners? In addition, these partner organizations must have been involved and played an important role in the project design and development. Projects must also employ an equitable and appropriate decision-making and oversight process that includes all partners to be given this priority.
- 2. Relevancy-** Explanation and documentation that the project is directed towards specific topic areas identified in the RFA under the project narrative. The topics are designed to improve and sustain the Gus Schumacher Incentive Program. In addition, the relevancy will be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the project based on the needs identified for the target audience, the inclusion of the target audience in the conceptualization and the development of project activities, and the degree to which the project addresses the audience(s) needs, and/or geographic areas served around the country.
- 3. Technical Merit-**
  - a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities, and outcomes;
  - b) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach (e.g., social, economic, and cultural relevance, distance based versus face-to-face for training and technical assistance;
  - c) Innovation and originality of the objectives and activities;
  - d) Expected performance targets, outcomes and impacts particularly related to the database for reporting and evaluation.
  - e) Adaptability to the other locations, communities, and/or agricultural products (culturally) and technologies;
  - f) Sustainability of the center partnerships and collaborations beyond the life of the grant, or a compelling explanation of how the project impact will be lasting if the collaboration itself is not sustained;
  - g) Reasonableness of the budget for the planned activities. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to comment whether it matches locally with the program described in the narrative.); and
  - h) Adequacy of the dissemination plans for evaluation reports, including the number and description of activities planned for disseminating evaluation reports on-line and how they will be addressed. There should be sufficient time commitment of the project directors and co-directors for the center activities including management. The plans for management and collaborative arrangements of the proposed project should be adequate, e.g., sufficient time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; clearly defined project roles and relationships among the key participants and collaborators; plan for decision-making; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.
- 4. Expertise and track record of the applicants-** To what extent does the application demonstrate expertise through successful multi-year experience in education, outreach, mentoring, evaluation, and/or technical assistance for the GusNIP program? The

successful multi-year experience can be demonstrated by the number of training, assistance, evaluation, or education activities previous carried out; the number of participants affected by the program, the success rate and the number of years a program or activity has been offered. The extent to which the qualifications of the applicant (individual or team and sub-contracts) to establish the proposed center activities are detailed. The applicant's ability to evaluate the center's outcomes. The applicant's demonstration of experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience.

- 5. Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and technology-** The adequacy of the expertise of the partners, collaborators, and potential sub-contracts, along with the sufficiency of the educational facilities and the technology for the proposed outreach, training and technical assistance, as well as the evaluation components for the center. See the criteria listed in the project narrative.
- 6. Adequacy of the plans for the participatory evaluation process,** outcome-based reporting, communication strategies, and the communication of finds and results beyond the immediate target audience including Federal and State agencies- Includes the number and expertise of evaluation team members who have agreed to serve or who have been identified to work on the evaluation. See the criteria listed in the project narrative.

### **C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality**

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#) for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

### **D. Organizational Management Information**

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted one-time, with updates on an as-needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determined prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

### **E. Application Disposition**

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by the GusNIP grant program for a period of three years.

## **PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations, and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

### **Federal Financial Management Requirements**

Grantees are expected to comply with applicable federal financial management requirements included in the award's terms and conditions and 2 CFR part 200. Below is a list of major requirements. Failure to comply could trigger significant audit liability and require global reconstruction of the grantees accounting system.

*Separation of Funds.* To avoid commingling of funds, grantees must establish a unique account(s) in their accounting system to capture and accumulate funding and related costs of the grant, apart from other federal and non-federal grants, projects and cost centers.

*Budget Categories.* To reduce the risk of material budget fluctuations changing the grant's scope and of applying indirect cost rates to prohibited cost categories, grantees must establish unique object codes in their accounting system to capture and accumulate costs by budget category (e.g., salaries, fringe benefits, consultants, travel, participant support costs, and subcontracts).

*Consistent Treatment of Costs.* Grantees must treat costs consistently across all federal and non-federal grants, projects and cost centers. For example, grantees may not direct-charge federal grants for costs typically considered indirect in nature, unless done consistently. Examples of indirect costs include: administrative salaries, rent, accounting fees, and utilities. In most cases, the cost to develop an accounting system adequate to justify direct-charging of the aforementioned items outweighs the benefits. As a result, use of an indirect cost rate is the most effective mechanism to recover these costs and not violate federal financial requirements of consistency, allocability and allowability. Additional guidance on indirect cost calculations can be found at <https://nifa.usda.gov/indirect-costs>.

### **B. Award Notice**

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in [2 CFR 200.210](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-200/subpart-200.210).

See <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions> to view current NIFA award terms and conditions.

### **C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page – <https://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations>.

NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide—a compendium of basic NIFA policies and procedures that apply to all NIFA awards, unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary—is available at <https://nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide>.

### **D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements**

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions> for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any programs or award-specific award terms, those, if any, will be identified in the award.

## **PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT**

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

NIFA Programmatic Contact –

Dr. Jane Clary Loveless; National Program Leader, Division of Nutrition, Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; 800 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 2322, SW, Washington, DC 20024; telephone: 202-720-3891; fax: 202-401-4888; e-mail: [jclary@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:jclary@nifa.usda.gov).

Dr. Pascale Jean; Division of Nutrition, Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; 800 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Cubicle #2452, SW, Washington, DC 20024; telephone: 202-401-2138; fax: 202-401-4888; email: [Pascale.Jean@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:Pascale.Jean@nifa.usda.gov)

NIFA Administrative/Business Contact –

Susan Bowman; Awards Management Branch Chief; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; 800 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 2240; Washington, DC 20024; telephone 202-401-4324; fax 202-401-6271; e-mail [sbowman@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:sbowman@nifa.usda.gov).

Adriene Woodin; Awards Management Branch Chief; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; 800 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 2182, SW, Washington, DC 20024; telephone 202-401-4320; fax 202-401-6271; e-mail [awoodin@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:awoodin@nifa.usda.gov).

FNS Policy Contact –

Daniel Cline; Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program; Food and Nutrition Service, USDA; 3101 Park Centre Dr., Alexandria, VA 22302; telephone 703-605-4388; e-mail [Daniel.Cline@fns.usda.gov](mailto:Daniel.Cline@fns.usda.gov).

## **PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Use of Funds; Changes**

#### **1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility**

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

#### **2. Changes in Budget or Project Plans**

In accordance with [2 CFR 200.308](#), awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons:

- (i) Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).
- (ii) Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
- (iii) The disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.
- (iv) The inclusion, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, of costs that require prior approval in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part or 45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, “Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals,” or 48 CFR Part 31, “Contract Cost Principles and Procedures,” as applicable.
- (v) The transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs as defined in §200.75 Participant support costs to other categories of expense.
- (vi) Unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards, the sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount sub-awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
- (vii) Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.
- (viii) The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions> for information about NIFA award terms.

## **B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards**

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. We will retain for three years a copy of an application that does not result in an award. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

## **C. Regulatory Information**

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 2 CFR Part 415, Subpart C, this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

## **D. Definitions**

Please refer to [7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#), and 7 CFR 3430 Subpart P Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program. If a conflict exists between the two regulations, the program-specific Administrative Provision is overriding.

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definitions are applicable:

**Community Food Assessment** is a collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food issues and assets, so as to inform change actions to make the community more food secure.

**Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** ventures require participants to pay an annual or seasonal subscription fee, in advance, for a set amount of food (share) that the business expects to produce that year/season; CSA shares are typically made available or delivered during regular intervals (e.g., weekly or bi-weekly) during the active (harvest) season; CSAs primarily sell local produce (at minimum the majority, more than 50%, of their sales come from local produce) where local produce is defined as agricultural products, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as meat, fish, dairy, and/or grains grown, gathered, or hunted either within the State where the CSA is headquartered or within 100 miles of the CSA's headquarters (so long as the point of origin is still within the States or territories of the United States of America); a CSA is **NOT** considered a store type but simply a way of doing business; CSAs can be conducted by SNAP-authorized agricultural producers or co-ops.

**Emergency Feeding Organization** means a public or nonprofit organization that administers activities and projects (including the activities and projects of a charitable institution, a food bank, a food pantry, a hunger relief center, a soup kitchen, or a similar public or private nonprofit eligible recipient agency) providing nutrition assistance to relieve situations of emergency and distress through the provision of food to needy persons, including low-income and unemployed persons. (See 7 U.S.C. 7501).

**Exemplary practices** means high quality community food security work that emphasizes food security, nutritional quality, environmental stewardship, and economic and social equity.

**Expert reviewers** means individuals selected from among those recognized as uniquely qualified by training and experience in their respective fields to give expert advice on the merit of grant applications in such fields who evaluate eligible proposals submitted to this program in their respective area(s) of expertise.

**Food security** means access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times.

**Fruits and Vegetables** means for the purposes of the incentives provided under these grants (i.e. as used in Section 4208) any variety of fresh, canned, dried, or frozen whole or cut fruits and vegetables without added sugars, fats, or oils, and salt (i.e. sodium).

**Incentives** are defined as any financial inducements that would increase the purchase and consumption of eligible fruits and vegetables by SNAP clients. See page 14 for details.

**Logic model** means a systematic and visual way to present and share an understanding of the relationships among resources available to operate a program, and includes: planned activities and anticipated results; and the presentation of the resources, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.

**Outcomes** means the changes in the wellbeing of individuals that can be attributed to a particular project, program, or policy, or that a program hopes to achieve over time. They indicate a measurable change in participant knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors. For the purposes of this document, ‘impact’ and ‘outcome’ are used interchangeably.

**Process evaluation** means examining program activities in terms of (1) the age, sex, race, occupation, or other demographic variables of the target population; (2) the program’s organization, funding, and staffing; and (3) its location and timing. Process evaluation focuses on program activities rather than outcomes.

**Non-profit Organization** means a Non-profit corporation is a special type of corporation that has been organized to meet specific tax-exempt purposes. To qualify for Non-profit status, your corporation must be formed to benefit: (1) the public, (2) a specific group of individuals, or (3) the membership of the Nonprofit.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** means the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 *et seq.*).

**Value Chain** means adding value to a product, including production, marketing, and the provision of after-sales service and incorporating fair pricing to farms. It also involves keeping the final pricing to customers within competitive range. Value chain development, therefore, is a process of building relationships between supplier and buyer that are reciprocal and win-win; instead of always striving to buy at lowest cost.

#### **E. Materials Available on the Internet**

GusNIP grant program information will be made available on the NIFA web site at <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program>.

The following are among the materials available on the web page:

1. General Information
2. Resources, including webinars and FAQs
3. Program Specific Resources